



## AHF Celebrates International Day of the Girl Child

By  
Sway Benns, Digital Media Manager

Women are currently outpacing men in a veritable array of situations, though it can often seem as if the trajectory is indiscriminate. To wit: in the United States, a higher percentage of women are earning college degrees than men, and those same women are more likely to earn a graduate degree; and yet, women find themselves outpacing men in another crucial arena—in many countries across the world women are more likely than men to contract HIV.

Faced with these statistics, it became clear to AHF staff members that the rising rates of HIV among their peers could not be solved with passivity—and so they began their work.

***“In many countries across the world women are more likely than men to contract HIV”***

After noting how numerous studies have documented how low self-esteem, loneliness, low social support, and poor coping mechanisms can result in elevated engagement in high-risk behavior, AHF staff members started Women Of Action (WOA), an organization created for young women (ages 18 - 30) to come together and have a safe space for open dialogue, interactive activities, activism, and learning in order to encourage women to maintain primary health goals.

Through their first initiative, “She’s Her Ally”—for International Day of the Girl Child on Oct. 11—they went directly to their future audience. By connecting with AHF global team members and affiliates, WOA co-conceived 23 events in 10 countries across the globe (including the United States, India, Kenya, Nigeria, Mexico, Jamaica, China, and Russia) during the month of September, 2015. For the initiative, WOA crafted a day of activities for young girls (ages 6 – 13) to communicate their hopes, fears, and dreams, build

relationships in their community, and have fun, in the hopes of working toward primary prevention (among HIV negative girls) and adherence (among HIV positive girls).

On Oct.11 they presented the photos, artwork, and video from these events online and at a loft space in Downtown Los Angeles. Attendees at the Los Angeles event were encouraged to stay awhile: they created art and cards of encouragement to be sent to the girls, perused the gallery, enjoyed an outdoor lunch, and made new friends.

Women have proven themselves capable of reversing detrimental trends—and excelling—when provided with a little encouragement and support. All participants in the “She’s Her Ally” initiative confirmed a strong desire to maintain connections to these girls as they mature into adolescence. Join us in laying the groundwork for maintaining health and wellness for girls around the world.



For more information about #ShesHerAlly visit: [www.WOA.la](http://www.WOA.la)

# Why The Focus on Women and Girls Should Be A High Priority for AHF



**By Cynthia Davis, MPH, Chair, AHF Board of Directors**

Thirty-six years into the HIV/AIDS pandemic, women and girls, in the U.S. and globally continue to experience a disproportionate burden of HIV/AIDS-related morbidity and mortality.

Since the mid-1990s, HIV/AIDS is no longer a death sentence because of increased access to life-saving antiretrovirals (ARVs),

but much work remains to be done to reduce the incidence of HIV infection among women and girls—especially women and girls of color.

In the U.S., Black women accounted for 64% of new infections among women in 2010. Young people are primarily being infected via heterosexual sex and youth under 35 accounted for 56% of new HIV infection in the U.S. in 2010. Globally, women represent approximately 51% of all adults living with HIV and HIV is the leading cause of death among women of reproductive age.

Young people ages 15-24 account for about 30% of new HIV

infections globally and women in sub-Saharan Africa account for 63% of young people infected with HIV. These numbers are so high due to a number of reasons: the lack of basic knowledge on how HIV is spread, low HIV testing uptake, gender inequalities, sexism, racism, homophobia, lack of access to services, sexual violence against women and girls, personal denial, fear and stigma.

AHF is in a prime position to work with NGOs around the world and to proactively engage in HIV/AIDS/STI primary prevention efforts targeting women and girls. These efforts are long overdue, because HIV/AIDS is 100% preventable, yet women and girls shoulder a disproportionate burden of the disease and remain highly vulnerable to it.

With AHF's resources and expertise in testing, treatment and care programs, we can make a tremendous difference in lowering HIV incidence and prevalence rates as well as in mobilizing communities to advocate for social change and economic justice for women and girls and all disenfranchised individuals impacted by HIV/AIDS.

Women and girls represent the future and deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. AHF has developed the requisite expertise over the past 28 years to make significant strides in ensuring that women and girls can lead healthier, productive lives.

By focusing on HIV/STI primary prevention as well as facilitating increased access to care and treatment for women and girls who are living with HIV, AHF can make a difference in the lives of millions of HIV/AIDS-affected women and girls. Saving the lives of women and girls is tantamount to saving the lives of entire communities and countries. If Not Now, Then When? And If Not AHF, Then Who?



## AHF Hub Opens in Kampala, Uganda

The newly opened AHF Wellness Hub in Kampala, Uganda is pioneering a one-stop sexual health clinic catering to the needs of the city's more affluent residents, who typically do not access these services through the municipal public health care facilities.

For a small fee, The Wellness Hub will provide a menu of services accessible in a comfortable, private setting and during hours convenient for the working professionals. The basic package of services will include HIV testing and risk reduction counseling, access to condoms, safe male circumcision, prevention of mother-to-child HIV transmission, and screening for sexually transmitted infections (STI) including hepatitis B and cervical cancer. In addition, the Wellness Hub also offers general wellness screening for the common "lifestyle diseases" as well as prostate cancer in men.

The underlying principles of health care delivery at the Hub parallel other clinics operated by AHF in Uganda and around the world: to deliver top-quality, patient-centered care and help clients take charge of their sexual health and wellbeing. The overarching goal of the Hub is to help reduce new HIV infections in Uganda and fill the critical gaps in treatment and prevention of STIs, as well as common lifestyle diseases.

"AHF would like to open such centers in several cities across Africa, this being the first," Dr. Penny Lutung, Africa Bureau Chief said. "Since we are setting up a replicable model for delivery of HIV and STI prevention services in a private setting, we are documenting all of the stages as we develop the model."

The AHF Wellness Hub launched at the end of August with an official opening ceremony on the terrace/roof-top of the AHF office building in Kampala, where the Hub is located. About 200 people attended the reception, including the media and dignitaries.

Based on the outpouring of interest toward The Wellness Hub, the staff in Uganda says they expect to see an influx of new patients and a steady growth in clientele in the coming months.



## We Are AHF...



**Elizabeth Phillips**  
Country Program Manager  
AHF Jamaica

**Q. What is your role at AHF?**

I am Country Program Manager for Jamaica and I LOVE my job! It is so exciting (and occasionally frustrating!) working in such an important (and in Jamaica, controversial) area. We do have a major problem with stigma, discrimination and fear about HIV but there are also some incredible individuals and organisations doing amazing work and I am so honored to partner with them to tackle these issues. I really believe that Jamaica is at a watershed and when change starts happening, it is going to come fast and furious.

**Q. What is the most challenging thing about working in Jamaica?**

There are many challenges in the Jamaican environment. A lot of people focus on stigma and discrimination and it is a serious problem. But I think that the most challenging issue is tackling a

bureaucracy that is so entrenched and rigid that it resists any kind of change.

**Q. What motivates you to work in HIV/AIDS public health field?**

I have always enjoyed working on empowering the disenfranchised. There are very few groups, if any, more disenfranchised than PLHIV. There is so much potential to make a difference and I fervently believe that AHF will have a major impact in Jamaica.

**If you could visit any country in the world, where would you go and why?**

I love travelling and prefer going off the beaten track. It would probably be somewhere in Asia - I am fascinated by the culture of India and it is definitely on my bucket list.

**Q. How do you like to spend your free time?**

Spending time with family and friends is always high on my priority list. There are rivers, secret beaches and mountains to explore. In fact, my daughter and I will be hiking to Blue Mountain peak, the highest point in Jamaica in December. I am already looking forward to it!

**Q. What is your role at AHF?**

I am the NYC Regional Director which includes business development in the Northeast, overseeing various AHF business lines, and working closely with our new affiliate AIDS Center of Queens County.

**Michael Camacho**  
NYC Regional Director  
AHF New York



**Q. What is the most memorable experience you've had so far while working at AHF?**

Two moments in recent history. The affiliation with ACQC and strengthening AHF's service delivery in NYC. And finally having all of the Brooklyn team under one roof.

**Q. What's one thing few people know about you?**

Most people think I'm a native New Yorker but I was actually born & raised in Arizona.

**Q. What is the most challenging part of your job?**

The greatest challenge is bringing the discussion of HIV/AIDS back to the forefront of community dialogue.

**Q. What do you like to do for fun?**

I'm a big music fan. Mostly alternative & indie rock. I see a live show about once a week.

## AHF Spotlight



**SEATTLE**—In early October, AHF opened a new Healthcare Center in Seattle, Washington. In addition to the clinic, AHF already operates two pharmacies and an Out of the Closet thrift store in the city.



**WASHINGTON**—AHF staged protests in Washington, DC and Lima, Peru this month, challenging the World Bank to change how it classifies countries by income level, which affects drug prices and access in countries. Nearly 75% of the world's poor live in countries that are considered Middle Income by the World Bank.



**CHICAGO**—AHF Wellness Center has opened its doors in Chicago. It is AHF's first in Illinois, and is housed at the AHF Healthcare Center/South Side, which opened in January of this year and provides a full spectrum of care and treatment for HIV/AIDS patients.



**Brazil**



**New York, USA**



**California, USA**



**Ohio, USA**



**South Africa**



**California, USA**

# PRIDE SEASON!



**Peru**



**Mexico**



**New York, USA**



**Netherlands**



**Sao Paulo**



**Washington, USA**



**Florida, USA**



**California, USA**



**Florida, USA**



**Florida, USA**

